

Report on the Public Open Houses held in May 2004



On May 18, 2004 and May 20, 2004, the WFLHD held public open house meetings in Libby and Thompson Falls, Montana to provide project information to the public and to gather public feedback regarding the proposed project.

Additionally, a meeting was held with agency representatives on May 19 in Missoula.

Promotion:

1. Newspaper ads were placed in the following newspapers:
 - Montanian
 - Daily Interlake
 - Kalispell
 - Western News
 - Spokesman Review
 - Missoulian
 - Sanders County Ledger
2. A press release was sent to all of the above papers, plus radio stations and other local outlets.
3. Meeting announcements were mailed to 210 people, including local, state and federal elected officials.



Meeting Summary

The purpose of the open house was to:

- Provide information on the project.
- Provide an overview of the EIS process and explain how the citizens can be involved.
- Solicit issues and concerns regarding the project.
- Gather input on the advantages and disadvantages of eliminating the dual road system
- Gather input on how people access and use the road.

The meeting format was an open house style. After signing in, participants were invited to view the 5 minute Project Overview PowerPoint presentation. Attendees visited with the project team and viewed aerials photos of the project. Displays included the following

- Project Overview
- The NEPA Trail
- Proposed Purpose
- Proposed Need
- Proposed Studies

The following comments were received at an Open House or via email following the meetings.

Comments from May 2004 Open House

- I have driven this area for over 30 years. Dust and sedimentation is minor now as to what it was 30 years ago. The county has too many miles of poorly maintained paved road to add this to them now. A speedway through Copper King and Snider is not needed. Leave it the way it is now – both sides of the river need access, property rights need to be respected. A gravel road is easier and cheaper to maintain.
- I think the most important issue is to eliminate the dual roads. Help water quality by eliminating dust and run off in the water. Help cut down maintenance for the county if road is paved. If road is not paved, don't do the project.
- Thompson Falls needs additional paved roads open all year for travel and emergency ingress and egress. It will help economic growth of the community. Need to preserve the wildlife and environmental quality. Recreation access is important – camping, fishing, hunting. Access to county seat located in Thompson Falls is important too.
- Because I live in the area and am very concerned with the wildlife, public safety. Where will the by pass for Thompson Falls be? With a large increase of traffic it will be needed.
- I have cabin 48. I do not want any road paved. Only camp in campgrounds. I think 4 wheelers should be totally outlawed except on main road. Make littering automatic jail time. Should have sheriff patrol more to keep 4 wheelers off private property.
- The current road system is not user friendly and not cost effective. The road could function as a source for greater recreation opportunities than currently and would allow easier access if one road is established and maintained. I believe strongly that the road should be paved to reduce dust pollution, increase safety and reduce maintenance expenses. This road if well constructed and paved could be a faster, shorter alternative route of travel to Thompson Falls, Spokane and for those people to Kalispell and Glacier.
- Please leave it as it is. I don't want this road fixed or paved. I don't want the traffic coming through Thompson Falls. I prefer a quiet town. This will create too much traffic. We don't need it.

- Paving the road will only move the back country further away. The present road works just fine. I am concerned that increased travel from a paved hwy will increase vandalism to cabins. We have one at 22 mile. Paving will increase speed. Speed will increase accidents with people and wildlife. Many people already drive too fast on the gravel road. Do you think they will obey speed signs on a paved road? No! I would like to see statistics of accidents on the 42 miles of Thompson River road compared to, say, Bull River road (paved) over the last 10 years. Eliminating some of the dual road is fine. Paving is not necessary or desirable. Right now the back country is 10 feet off the road.
- This project has the potential for additional economic drain on the already challenged economics of Libby & Troy. Libby is potentially the most affected as currently there is some business that comes to Libby from Thompson Falls with the improved road. There is also the potential that tourists who now travel hwy 2 would route around Libby and Troy taking the Thompson River as an alternate route thus diverting potential business from an already depressed economy. Why not use these funds to fix the already existing roads (hwy 2 at swamp creek) that are in desperate need of repair.
- I hunt and fish in the Thompson River area. I have had to run off the road on the public road side because of speeding log trucks and their service vehicles. I would only support changing and paving this road if it is left 35-45 mph maximum. A high speed road would ruin this wonderful natural area for y use. Why speed through such a beautiful area. Also higher speed vehicles would kill more wildlife and people. But speed limits would have to be enforced as they are not now.
- I am concerned about PCTC (Plum Creek) getting more land into development in to Thompson drainage.
- Jeff Gruber
- We have been broken into at least once if not twice a year for many, many year – everyone has this problem- spring and fall are the worst times- wild life needs no more impact then what is there. Low water impact. One road may be nice but can you access everything? We pay taxes for that area- I wish we had a way to help prevent the cabin break-ins there very destructive and in 40 or more years no one has ever been caught- that all 60+ cabins, not a good record.
- We live on Middle Thompson lake and are very familiar with the area and existing roads. We travel them regularly. We seriously question the reasons stated for doing this project.
 - Reduced maintenance and improved safety. There are no serious safety issues with the current two roads. Can you document accidents or deaths caused by these roads? If you make that statement you should be able to prove it.
 - Improved public access. Currently most of the USFS roads in this area are gated. Also Plumb Creek Timber company continues to gate more and more of their roads. What value is there in building a fancy road to drive to gated roads?

- Sediment into Thompson River. Had there been studies to show exactly how much sediment is getting into the river and is the loading sufficient to make an impact? Throughout northwest Montana there are roads very similar and the streams are still good fisheries and there is no serious degradation of water quality.
- Allowing loaded trucks to haul during spring thaw. This is the standard mode in the logging business. Logging trucks cannot travel off the main roads to be loaded so what good is a road that will allow loaded trucks? Load limits on all haul roads in this area are common during spring breakup. This is grasping at straws to justify construction.
- What is wrong with the two road system now? Currently, traveling on one or the other road allows access to both sides of Thompson River along much of this area. This allows better access than reducing to just one road. Why does our Federal Government need to get involved in an issue that has worked sufficiently for 50 years. This had worked well with the counties and private owner handling the roads there.

This is a disgusting example of our government searching for ways to spend our tax dollars. It is shameful that the money and effort should be wasted on this issue when there are so many needs that are not being answered.

A NO BUILD alternative is the only option that should be decided upon. This is our preferred alternative.